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ABSTRACT

In October, 1979, a survey of students enrolled in noncredit Data Processing (DP) and Secretarial Science (SS) courses at Triton Community College was conducted to determine if conversion of noncredit adult education courses to regular college credit status would result in a substantial loss of students. Responses were obtained from 474 SS students (56.7% of those surveyed) and 145 DP students (59.2%), revealing that: (1) job preparation was the major educational objective for both groups; (2) 17.2% of DP and 25.4% of SS students would not return if courses were offered for regular credit only; (3) 59% of DP and 53% of SS students would prefer regular credit courses if given a choice of both; (4) the location of the class was the most important factor in the decision to enroll and the type of grading was the least important factor; and (5) 40.9% of DP and 14.3% of SS students planned to work for a degree. The study report evaluates the financial impact of maintaining the status quo, converting all courses to credit courses, and providing parallel credit/noncredit courses, concluding that a final decision could be made only after the State of New Jersey decides whether to reimburse colleges for all courses or to continue funding on a credit basis only. The survey instrument is appended. (JP)

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Triton College

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A STUDY OF CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSE CREDIT STRATEGY

Office of College & Community Research

Issued: November, 1979

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Vol. XV, No. 8

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ABSTRACT

A Study of Continuing Education Course Credit Strategy

The project was undertaken to test the premise that conversion of occupational adult education courses to parallel regular credit courses would result in the loss of substantial numbers of students.

Surveys were distributed to all students attending adult education courses in Data Processing and Secretarial Science during the week of October 15, 1979. Extrapolations from the survey responses show the outcomes of the following courses of action:

A. Maintaining the status quo.

1. Many students would prefer regular credit courses: Data Processing = 53.8%, Secretarial Science = 43.4%.

2. Tuition income for Fall 1979 = $29,098.

B. Shift to offering only credit courses.

1. Enrollment would drop in both disciplines: Data Processing = -16.8%, Secretarial Science = -25.4%.

2. Tuition income for Fall 1979 would drop, but state reimbursement would result in a net income of approximately $7,984.

3. Many of the students would enroll in the regular credit classes although they prefer adult education classes: Data Processing = 35%, Secretarial Science = 42%.

C. Offer parallel courses.

1. Enrollment would remain the same.

2. Tuition income would drop, but additional state reimbursement would result in a net increase of approximately $9,800.

3. There would be additional expenses for extra faculty salaries and room rentals.

Introduction

Continuing education is an integral part of the comprehensive program at Triton College. As stated in the School of Continuing Education Catalog:

> "The adult continuing education and community service programs at Triton are a departure from the traditional concept of the college. They serve those whom the traditional college program either cannot serve or has failed to serve. Our programs involve those phases of the educational process which provide educational, social, cultural, and recreational services both in the classroom and beyond formal classroom instruction."
>
> "The School of Continuing Education at Triton has four specific goals. Our first purpose is to identify those who need our services. Our second purpose is to find meaningful ways in which to serve them. Our third purpose is to take the service to them or bring them to the service. Our fourth purpose it to evaluate our efforts and adjust our programs accordingly."

This study is one contribution toward achieving the fourth purpose. Discussions regarding the type of credit (regular college credit versus non-credit continuing education) assigned certain classes (e.g., data processing and secretarial sciences) have proliferated for years. At the center of these discussions are the facts that 1) for the College, regular credit courses are finacially superior, and 2) for some students the fact that a course is non-credit and therefore low risk is the most important consideration. The untested hypothesis was that a large drop in enrollment could be expected if a conversion were made from non-credit to credit for those courses with parallel credit offerings.

Methodology

To test this hypothesis, a short eight question survey (Appendix A) was developed. Teachers of all Secretarial Science and Data Processing courses within the School of Continuing Education were asked to distribute the surveys to their classes during the week of October 15, 1979, and return the completed surveys to the School of Continuing Education. Completed questionnaires were received from 474 Secretarial Science students (56.7%) and 145 Data Processing students (59.2%). Since the sample was an availability sample (i.e., only those present in class), the results cannot be considered to be scientifically accurate. However, due to the number of respondents and the fact that they were actually in class, we can assume that the results are an excellent straw poll of continuing education students.

The completed surveys were keypunched and verified. The data were then analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings:

The first item on the survey asked the students their primary reason for enrolling in a Continuing Education Secretarial or Data Procesing course. The primary reasons given were: to prepare for a future job (45%), to improve skills needed in present job (26%), and for personal interest or self-development (16%). Table 1 summarizes this item. It is interesting to note that for Data Processing, the exploration of courses (19.3%) was a major reason for enrolling.

The pattern of response on this item suggests that a very close link exists between continuing education courses in these areas and education for a career.

TABLE 1

Educational Intent By Course

(In Percents)

	Data Processing (N=145)	Secretarial Science (N=474)	Total (N=619)
Job Preparation	40.0	46.4	44.9
Skill Upgrading	20.0	27.2	25.5
Course Exploration	19.3	5.3	8.6
Transfer	0.0	0.2	0.2
Skill Review	0.0	5.5	4.2
Personal Development	20.7	14.6	16.0
Other	0.0	0.8	0.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0

The second item explained that the course was an adult continuing education course which could not be applied toward a degree. Students were asked if they would have registered for the course if it were only offered for regular college credit and at the same cost. The intent of this item was to determine what percentage of the student population would be lost if the skill courses were only offered for regular credit. The analysis showed that a considerable number of students would be lost by offering only credit courses. In Data Processing

the impact would not be as severe as in Secretarial Science, but in both cases the loss would be substantial.

TABLE 2

Enrollment If For Credit Only By Course

(In Percents)

Enrolled If For Credit Only	Data Processing (N=145)	Secretarial Science (N=468)	Total (N=613)
Yes	82.8	74.6	76.5
No	17.2	25.4	23.5
	100.0	100.0	100.0

The next question added the element of preference by asking, "If two sections of this course were offered at this time and at the same cost, one of which was for regular college credit and the other for adult education credit, in which section would you have enrolled?" Students in Data Processing courses tended to prefer regular college credit (59%). Secretarial Science students preferred adult education credit (53%).

TABLE 3

Preference of Credit Type By Course

(In Percents)

Credit Type	Data Processing (N=143)	Secretarial Science (N=462)	Total (N=605)
Regular	59.4	47.0	49.9
Adult Educ.	40.6	53.0	50.1
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Cross-tabulation of the previous two items gives an indication of the strength of student preferences for credit or non-credit courses. In Data Processing courses 83.2% of students said that they still would have enrolled if the course had only been offered on a credit basis, and 59.4% would have chosen a credit course if there had been parallel offerings. Table 4 summarizes the cross-tabulation of these items.

TABLE 4

Data Processing

Preference of Credit Type By Enrollment If for Credit Only

	Column Percents Enrolled for Credit Only			Total Percents (N=143) Enrolled for Credit Only		
Credit Preference	Yes (N=119)	No (N=24)	Total (N=143)	Yes	No	Total
Regular	64.7	33.3	59.4	53.8	5.6	59.4
Adult Educ.	35.3	66.7	40.6	29.4	11.2	40.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	83.2	16.8	100.0

Data Processing students answering "yes/regular credit" are consistent. They would enroll for a credit course if it were offered, and, in fact, prefer a credit course. Since their current course is not for credit, it may be assumed that these students (53.8% of Data Processing students) are not getting the maximum advantage from their current course.

Students answering "no/adult education credit" are also consistent. They do not want a credit course and would not enroll in a credit course. It may be assumed that these students (11.2% of Data Processing students) are getting the type of advantage from their current course that they want.

However, the group which answered "no/regular credit" (5.6%) or "yes/adult education credit" (29.4%) were inconsistent. A possible explanation is that the "no/regular credit" group has not achieved the self-confidence needed to take college credit work. The "yes/adult education credit" group is the elastic portion of the market. They prefer adult credit, but will enroll in regular credit courses if they were the only type available.

A similar analysis of responses from Secretarial Science students shows 74.6% willing to enroll in a credit course if that were the only type offered. When asked about enrollment choice if parallel offerings were made, 52.9% chose adult education credit. Table 5 summarizes the cross-tabulation of these items.

TABLE 5

Secretarial Science

Preference of Credit Type By Enrollment If For Credit Only

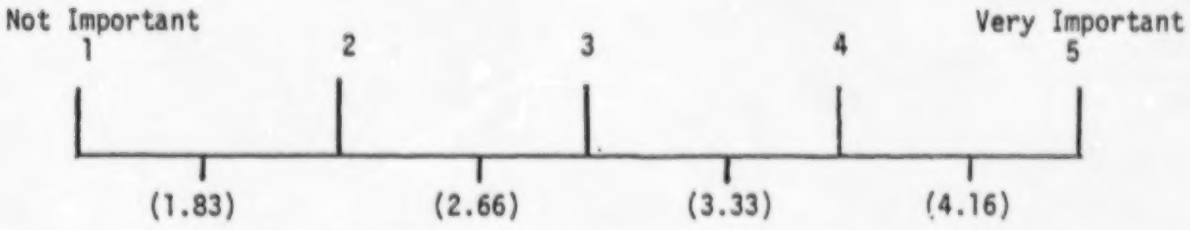
	Column Percents			Total Percents (N=461)		
	Enrolled for Credit Only			Enrolled for Credit Only		
Credit Preference	Yes (N=344)	No (N=117)	Total (N=461)	Yes	No	Total
Regular	58.1	14.5	47.1	43.4	3.7	47.1
Adult Educ.	41.9	85.5	52.9	31.2	21.7	52.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	74.6	25.4	100.0

Students in the "yes/regular credit" group (43.4%) would enroll if the course were offered only for credit, and would actually prefer this situation.

Students in the "no/adult education credit" group (21.7%) are taking the type of credit class that they want to take and would not shift.

The "fence sitters" in this analysis are the "no/regular credit" group (3.7%) and the "yes/adult credit" group (31.2%). The first group would be lost to the institution if a shift were made to regular credit courses only; they would not enroll in regular credit courses. The second group is the elastic portion of the market. This 31.2% would enroll for a regular credit class if it were the only type available.

For the next set of items, respondents were asked to indicate how important each item was in making a decision to enroll in an adult education course. The scale used was:



(Imaginary division points are indicated in parentheses)

Location of the course was indicated to be the most important factor in decision-making. Table 6 shows that this item was either important or very important to 60% of the Data Processing enrollees and to 71% of the Secretarial Science enrollees.

TABLE 6

Importance of Location By Course

(In Percents)

	Data Processing (N=141)	Secretarial Science (N=409)	Total (N=550)
Not Important	18.4	14.7	15.6
Neutral	21.3	14.7	16.4
Important	60.3	70.7	68.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.1	100.0
Average	3.75	4.01	3.94
Standard Deviation	1.35	1.33	1.34
Rating	Important	Important	Important

Ranking second was the fact that adult education courses meet only once each week. This item was rated important or very important by 58% of the Data Processing students and 47% of the Secretarial Science students. (Table 7 on the following page)

TABLE 7

Importance of Meeting Once Per Week

(In Percents)

	Data Processing (N=142)	Secretarial Science (N=404)	Total (N=546)
Not Important	19.7	26.7	24.5
Neutral	22.5	26.5	25.5
Important	57.7	46.8	49.6
TOTAL	99.9	100.0	100.0
Average	3.68	3.31	3.41
Standard Deviation	1.41	1.40	1.41
Rating	Important	Neutral	Important

The third item was that the course meets for less than a semester. This item was rated as important or very important by 34% of Data Processing students, and 28% of Secretarial Science students. The responses placed this item toward the not important side of the scale.

TABLE 8

Course Length By Course

(In Percents)

	Data Processing (N=140)	Secretarial Science (N=391)	Total (N=531)
Not Important	50.7	45.8	47.1
Neutral	15.0	25.8	23.0
Important	34.3	28.4	29.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average	2.68	2.65	2.66
Standard Deviation	1.59	1.40	1.45
Rating	Neutral	Not Important	Not Important

The fourth item influencing the decision to enroll in an adult education class was the lack of exams and grading. This was seen as important by 34% of the Data Processing students and 28% of the Secretarial Science students.

TABLE 9

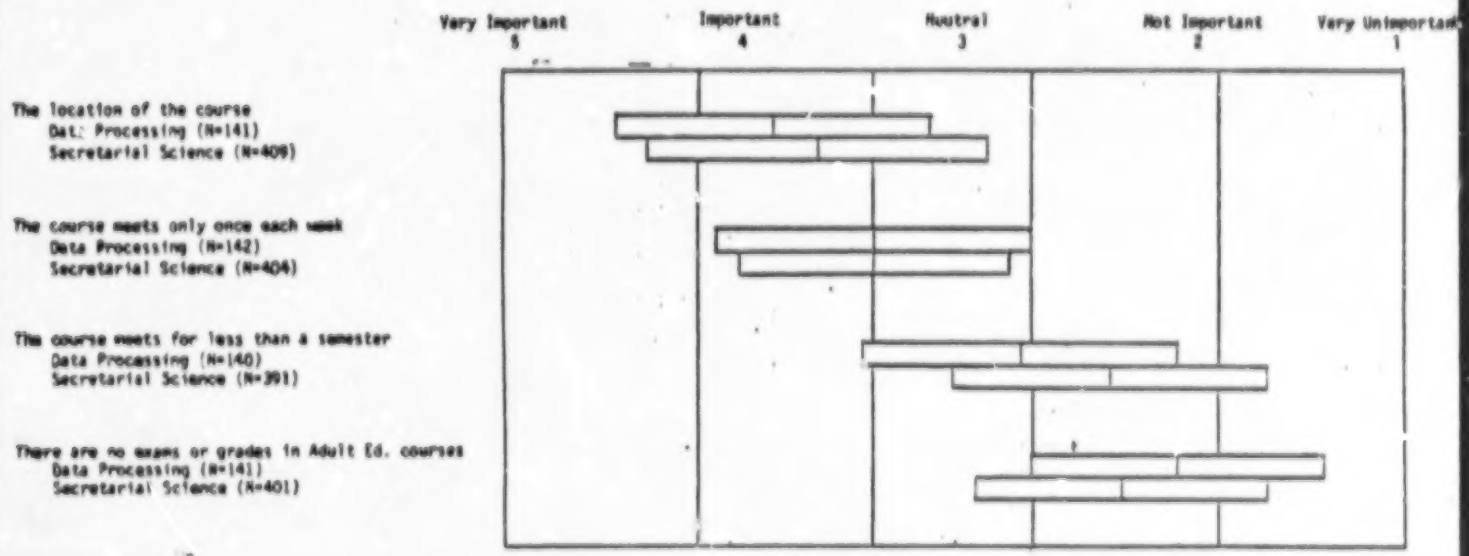
Importance of No Exams and No Grades By Course

(In Percents)

	Data Processing (N=140)	Secretarial Science (N=391)	Total (N=531)
Not Important	50.7	45.8	47.1
Neutral	15.0	25.8	23.0
Important	34.3	28.4	29.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average	2.38	2.24	2.28
Standard Deviation	1.48	1.41	1.43
Rating	Not Important	Not Important	Not Important

These four items are summarized in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1



Finally, the students were asked if they planned to seek a degree from Triton College. There was a noticeable difference between Data Processing and Secretarial Science students. In Data Processing 41% may seek a degree, and in Secretarial Science 14% may seek a degree.

TABLE 10

Plan To Seek a Triton Degree By Course

(In Percents)

Degree Planned	Data Processing (N=132)	Secretarial Science (N=455)	Total (N=587)
Yes	40.9	14.3	20.3
No	59.1	85.7	85.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

Discussion

The results of this survey are important for three reasons. First, they show what portion of students would be lost if only credit courses were offered. Second, they indicate that some students are not earning the type of credit which they prefer. Third, the fact that adult education courses do not have grades or tests has been shown to be a minimal cause of preference for these courses.

The scenarios which could evolve from this research and their implications are as follows:

Scenario #1: Maintain the status quo. Maintenance of the status quo results in revenues of about $29,000 from tuition. Educationally, large numbers of students will continue to find themselves in courses which offer a different kind of credit than that which they prefer. The levels of mis-services are 53.8% in Data Processing and 43.4% in Secretarial Science.

TABLE 11

Revenue Sheet for Status Quo

	N	$\bar{X}$ Rate	Current Tuition
Data Processing	244	22.00	5,368
Secretarial Science	836	28.35	23,730
TOTAL	1080	26.94	29,098

Scenario #2: Convert all adult education courses with parallel courses in the regular credit area to regular credit. This would reduce enrollment in Data Processing by 16.8% and reduce enrollment in Secretarial Science by 25.4%. It would also gain additional state reimbursement from 83.2% of the Data Processing students and from 74.6% of the Secretarial Science students. Under the current state funding system regular credit career courses are reimbursed at $25.22 for Data Processing, and $16.39 for Secretarial Science per credit hour; no reimbursement is made for adult education courses. However, it has been proposed that for FY81 adult education courses be reimbursed at a rate per credit hour similar to career courses. The financial balance sheet of Scenario #2 is as follows:

TABLE 12

Revenue Sheet for Converting All To Credit

	N	Rate	Tuition	Rate Reimbursement	Reimbursement Total	Total
Data Processing	203	21.00	4,263	25.22	5,119.66	9,382.66
Secretarial Science	624	28.00	17,472	16.39	10,227.36	27,699.36
TOTAL	827	14.00/ cr.hr.	21,735	18.62	15,397.02	37,082.02

Under the current state funding system a net dollar increase of approximately $8,000 could be achieved by converting these career parallel courses to regular credit. In addition, expenditures may be decreased. The enrollment of fewer students could result in the offering of fewer sections. This would reduce overhead. But there is an educational price to be paid for this change. Substantial numbers of students would find themselves in a type of course which they did not desire. Approximately 35% of the Data Processing students and 42% of the Secretarial Science students would be in regular credit classes, when they would rather be in non-credit, adult education classes. This wholesale conversion of courses to regular credit would be financially advantageous to Triton, but would make it impossible for many students to enroll in classes of the credit-type which they prefer.

Scenario #3: Offer parallel courses at similar times, locations and costs. In this scenario, overhead would be higher due to increased salary and room rental fees, although the increases could be tempered by distributing both regular credit and adult credit classes strategically around the community. The College would gain $9,800 (see Scenario #3 Revenue Sheet) and all students would be enrolled in the credit-type of class which they prefer.

TABLE 13

Revenue Sheet for Parallel Courses

	N	Rate	Tuition	Rate Reimbursement	Reimbursement Total	Total
Adult Education						
Data Processing	99	22.00	2,178			2,178
Secretarial Science	442	28.35	12,530			12,531
Regular Credit						
Data Processing	145	21.00	3,045	25.22	3,657	6,702
Secretarial Science	394	28.00	11,032	16.39	6,458	17,490
TOTAL	1,080	26.65	28,785	18.77	10,115	38,901

A fourth scenario may be developing. Scenario #4 would result from a change by the state to similar funding of all classes regardless of credit-type. In this case there would be no demonstrable financial advantage to the conversion of all courses to regular credit. Also, such conversion would result in increased expenditure, and the same percentage of improperly-served students as under Scenario #1.

Triton should not make a decision regarding changing credit-types of classes until the state makes a final decision regarding their reimbursement. But, immediate consideration should be given to methods of encouraging those students who prefer regular credit classes to take proficiency exams and pursue advanced credit courses leading to a degree.

STUDENT OPINION SURVEY

Please take five minutes to complete this short survey to assist Triton College in offering programs and services that will continue to meet your needs and those of our community. We do not need your name, but it will be necessary for you to supply some background information about yourself. We appreciate your time and thank you for giving us your candid opinions. Please return this form to your instructor.

ON THE LINE NEXT TO EACH ITEM PLACE THE ONE NUMBER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OPINION OR SITUATION.

____ 1. My PRIMARY reason for enrolling in this course is:

1. To prepare for a future job
2. To improve skills needed in present job
3. To explore courses to help make a career decision
4. To prepare for transfer to another school
5. To remedy or review basic educational or vocational skills
6. For personal interest or self-development
7. Other

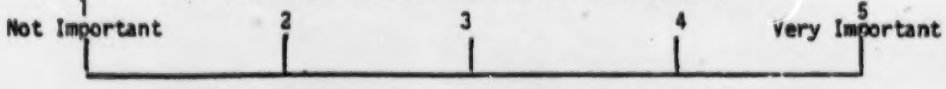
____ 2. This course is an adult continuing education course. The adult education credits you earn do not apply toward the certificate or degree in Secretarial Science. Would you have enrolled in this course if it were only offered for regular college credit and at the same cost?

1. Yes
2. No

____ 3. If two sections of this course had been offered at this time and at the same cost, one of which was for regular college credit and the other for adult education credit, in which section would you have enrolled?

1. Regular college credit
2. Adult education credit

4. How important is each of the following in your decision to enroll in an Adult Education course? Use the following scale.



____ A. There are no exams or grades in Adult Education courses
____ B. The location of the course
____ C. The course meets only once each week
____ D. The course meets for less than a semester

____ 5. Do you plan to seek a degree or certificate in Secretarial Science from Triton College?

1. Yes
2. No

____ 6. Sex

1. Male 2. Female

7. How old are you? _____

8. Town of residence _____

If you would like to make any comments regarding this course or Triton College, use the back of this sheet.

THANK YOU!

GENERAL COMMENTS ON SECRETARIAL SCIENCE

_____ is an excellent teacher.

I have enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of this course because after a hard day's work you cannot push yourself too much. I learn more if I am not too pressured. By the way, why is this survey??

I would have preferred to take this course for a college credit. I liked having the class so close to home.

You have a good program, don't change.

I would like to have a course (in Adult Education) in Office Machines, or, at least, Dictaphone.

I would have taken an accounting course too, but, it was scheduled at the same time as the typing course.

I would have taken this course for a credit if it was offered as such, but could not attend a full semester because of other personal commitments.

I think that this is an excellent course, and for the benefit of others I hope they will continue to offer it. I would, however, in my opinion, give some kind of credit for this course.

I would get more out of this course if it was longer than 12 weeks. I would remember, retain more.

You should offer two classes for clerk-typist night school classes at Triton or Leyden. I wasn't able to sign up because the class was already filled at Triton.

I feel the brochure should fully explain what this course is. This course only acquaints one with the various office machines and does not allow enough time to really learn how to operate them to secure a job.

I wish they would have business courses at West Leyden. They have the facilities and I wouldn't have to fight traffic and trains coming to East Leyden. Quite a lot of my neighbors would take more classes also.

I am enjoying this course very much.

It gave me enough experience to realize machines are not for me. It has been negative since I'm bombing out, but positive because I didn't jump right into secretarial science as a major.

Excellent teacher!

This is the first course I've taken at Triton College. If it had been offered for credit thats the class I would have signed up for.

This course should either be two hours a night or earlier in the evening. 10:00 P.M. is too late to type and after working eight hours.

I truly believe too much material in this short a time - course should be longer.

I think this course is terrific for housewives and mothers and was originally scheduled for afternoons, which would have been more convenient. As it was, it was dropped because there were so few students. I think the afternoon classes are better.

The teacher is excellent!

At this particular time, decisions are not exact or may be subject to change.

I think this is an excellent course.

The grounds of the school are a disgrace.

I think that the class should meet more than once a week.

I feel it is a good experience of college even though I'm not going, and plus I feel the continuing education for a young adult is most important! No one can be <u>too</u> smart.

I like this class - good instructor.

This course is an excellent course. The instructors are excellent. For adults, I feel the class would be better to start at 12 o'clock instead of one. I feel it's a very worthwhile course at the college.

It provides what I wanted - a variety of experiences pertaining to future job requirements without pressure of grades, etc.

The teacher is great _____.

I like it very much; we have a good teacher!

I may possibly decide to seek a degree or certificate but not necessarily in Secretarial Science.

I would like to take Shorthand II next semester at Riverside-Brookfield. Last winter I was called on the day class was to start, only to be told the class was cancelled. Due to winter weather I was unable to attend another school. I would like to attend RB next semester even though there are not enough students.

Very helpful in my job career now, and I'm sure for the future.

I believe there should be a continuing class in Stenoscript--12 weeks is just not enough!

I feel the course should be extended for a longer period of time--perhaps 2-3 weeks longer in order to comprehend.

Would like to have Stenoscript course run a few weeks longer.

I feel that Chicago residents should be able to charge back a course such as this since it is not offered in Chicago.

The class should run for at least another 12 weeks.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON DATA PROCESSING

I hope in the future that more courses could be offered on Saturday as well as during the week.

I think that Data Processing should be included in some of the other Adult Education Schools (closer to home).

I'm glad the course is being offered. It shows our school is current with the times.

I have taken a couple of classes from the Adult Education. Most of them proved to be very helpful and understanding.

Excellent instructor - very helpful and nice to deal with.

A major factor is not having to go through a college admission procedure.

I think that you should offer college credit for Adult Continuing Education courses. After all, you work just as hard in a non-credit class as in a credit class, don't you? You should offer a larger variety of computer science courses including more advanced classes. Because you do not, I will have to look elsewhere when I wish to continue with the same.

Out-of-district rates are high.

I believe that more regular college credit courses should be offered during the evening hours for adult students with full-time jobs during the day. Registration should be extended to evening hours at the beginning of each term to facilitate the above. Either the course description mail-out or registration receipt should contain a map of the particular school, with room breakdowns.

Since I work during the days night courses are more desirable and a factor in my decision in #3, assuming that regular college courses are basically offered during the day.

Question 1 - one primary reason is hard to decide on; 1, 2, 3, and 6 all apply equally. Adult education courses probably do take some of the pressure off from regular college. However, when I enrolled I did not realize it was an ungraded course.

I think the Adult Education courses (i.e. most probably held at night) should be in a building closer to student parking or have security every night these classes are held.

In order to be able to fully learn the skills in keypunch, a class or some kind of place should be open to students for some other time during the week so the skills learned can be practiced or reenforced.

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